

Irish Tree Society

Annual Lecture 2016

Managing Threats to Ornamental Trees

Tony Kirkham, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin – Thursday 6 October at 2 pm

Tony Kirkham has been Head of the Arboretum and Horticultural Services at RBG, Kew since 2001: he is responsible for the care of *c.*14,000 trees, some over 300 years old. Since the devastation of Kew's tree collection in the Great Storm of October 1987, he has spearheaded its restocking, often using specimens obtained on his expeditions to Chile and the Far East. During 1989 – 1997 he collected in the species-rich temperate forests of China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Russian Far East (Sakhalin). He has written a vivid account of these travels with the late Mark Flanagan VMH, *Plants from the Edge of the World – New Explorations in the Far East* (2005). In the footsteps of distinguished botanical forebears, Tony has visited Sichuan five times. His book, co-authored with Mark Flanagan, *Wilson's China – A Century On* (2009) provides a lavishly illustrated narrative of the travels in western China of Ernest H Wilson (who first introduced to cultivation many plants discovered by Augustine Henry), juxtaposing their own photographs with Wilson's a century earlier. Tony has also considerably revised and expanded (2009) G E Brown's (1974) classic *The Pruning of Trees, Shrubs and Conifers*, considered the 'Bible' of woody-plant pruning. Among many interests, he is a trustee of the Tree Register of Britain and Ireland with which the Irish Tree Society is closely associated.

Mature ornamental trees face many challenges: climate change, weather (drought, floods, storms), diseases, human activities (e.g. soil compaction causing root death) – all leading to growth decline, even mortality. In this lecture, Tony Kirkham will illustrate how both local environment and management are fundamental to the health and longevity of trees: knowledge of their natural habitats may guide cultural practices to mimic them as best as possible.

